

Superintendent Roger Leon
Newark Board of Education
765 Broad Street, 3rd Floor
Newark, NJ 07102

April 25, 2019

Dear Superintendent Leon,

As long-time partners in the Newark enrollment process, and leaders of Newark's charter schools, we are writing to you today to share concerns we have about the current implementation of the Newark Enrolls match process, and to offer our support to the Newark Board of Education in whatever capacity might be helpful to ensure that the system meets our collective goals for the 2019-20 school year.

As you know, our respective organizations have partnered with the Newark Board of Education since 2013 to create a city-wide enrollment system that has made enrollment simpler and easier for families, prioritized parent's decisions about what schools best meet their child's needs, and improved equity of access to quality schools for all of Newark's children. Over the years, we have also collaborated to improve how the system works; we have learned from initial implementation challenges and worked with the district to make policy changes in response to community feedback.

Consistent with this collaboration and partnership, we appreciated the opportunity to engage in a productive discussion with new District leadership at the beginning of this year about how to continue to change and improve this enrollment system, while building on past practices that are working well. In doing so, district and charter partners agreed to some written policy changes, and verbally agreed to not break from past practices around student matching and placement. The District staff at the table asked us to alert the Superintendent directly if we had concerns about the match process as it was implemented.

It is for this reason that we are contacting you today. On Friday April 12th, our schools received match information that is inconsistent with what we agreed to this past fall. Specifically, there are significantly fewer students matched to many of our schools than was submitted in our match targets that we submitted to the enrollment office, even when there was sufficient demand from Newark families to fill additional seats. This undermatching has ramifications for our school operations and budgets and will impede our ability to equitably serve Newark students in the most effective way possible. It also denies hundreds of families their top priority school and will likely lead to more dissatisfied families requesting to change their match at the Family Support Center, increased student mobility over the summer and in the fall, and less reliability in rosters at all schools. This is an outcome that we all want to minimize.

We write to you today because our number one goal as partners is to ensure that our enrollment process is best serving the children and families of Newark. We ask for your assistance in working to find a solution for the issue we've identified, and once again offer any additional capacity we can to assist the District in executing this process.

For a number of years now, Newark schools have made great progress for families by working together. We've come together to advocate for funding, worked across political lines to elect school board leadership, and collaborated on professional learning. In doing so, we've created an innovative system of schools that serves low-income and minority students arguably as well as any school system in the country.

Effective collaboration around, and implementation of, a transparent and equitable school enrollment process across school types has been a key contributor to this progress. We ask you to work with us to find solutions to these current challenges, and to continue our work together to provide great public schools for Newark students.

Sincerely,

DOMINIQUE LEE, ACHIEVE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL
A. ROBERT GREGORY, MARION P THOMAS CHARTER SCHOOL
DAMION FRYE, M.E.T.S CHARTER SCHOOL NEWARK
MICHELE MASON, NEWARK CHARTER SCHOOL FUND
HARRY LEE, NEW JERSEY CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION
JESSICA ROONEY, PEOPLE'S PREP
YASMEEN SAMPSON, PHILIP'S ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
MARSHAE NEWKIRK, ROSEVILLE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL
TAMARA COOPER, UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOL